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DATE: January 9, 2012
FROM: Robert N. Pangborn *R. N. Pangborn*
TO: Administrative Council on Undergraduate Education

As you know, there has been recent concern and discussion about the issue of courses that span semester boundaries. Many, but not all, of these courses involve a travel component. Since the University is defined as a "term-based" institution, courses that span multiple semesters put us in violation of US Department of Education Title IV program regulations and endanger our institutional eligibility for federal student aid.

Senate Policy 34-81 stipulates that "the student must be registered for the course during the semester in which the course requirements are completed and the grade or symbol must be assigned at the end of that semester." However, given the growing importance of providing students with exposure to venues related to their studies, especially globally, we would like offer faculty maximum opportunity for scheduling classes having a travel component, while still remaining in compliance with federal regulations.

As a procedural matter, this will be accomplished with the following:

1. Consistent with the earlier scheduling of commencement this year, the spring semester end and summer semester begin dates will be one week earlier than in the past. Spring semester 2012 will end on the Sunday of spring commencement weekend and the summer semester will begin the following day (Monday).
2. The fall semester end and spring semester begin dates will coincide with fall commencement. Fall semester 2012 will end on the Sunday of fall commencement weekend and the spring semester (2013) will begin the following day (Monday).

Changes to spring end/summer begin dates have already been made and can be viewed at http://www.registrar.psu.edu/staff/course_offering/semester_dates.cfm The changes to the fall end/spring begin dates will be programmed later this week.

In order to maintain our compliance with federal aid regulations, it is imperative that Penn State courses are "term-based" – that is, courses should fall wholly within the semester. For courses in which the travel component takes place during the fall or spring semester, for

example, over the Thanksgiving break or over Spring break, these calendar changes will have no impact on the scheduling of the course. For courses in which the travel component takes place after the completion of classes, these new semester dates allow courses with travel components to run by splitting the course into the classroom portion and a separate travel component. In other words, a course would meet for the appropriate number of credits in the fall, spring, or summer semester in the classroom. A separately registered part of the course that encompasses the travel, assigned an appropriate number of credits, would occur during the following semester or summer session. So, for a course that involves class work during the fall semester and a travel component over the winter break, a classroom-based course would meet during the fall semester. The number of credits assigned to this course would be indicative of the amount of work involved in the classroom-based portion of the course. Students would register, complete the classroom work, and be graded on this course during the fall semester. The travel component, occurring during the break, would be scheduled for the spring semester. The number of credits assigned to the travel component of the course would be indicative of the amount of work involved in this travel-based portion of the course. Students would register, complete the travel work, and be graded on this work during the spring semester.

The ARUAC screen used to create course sections will henceforth require the course section begin and end dates to fall within the semester begin and end dates. This change will apply to all courses that have previously bridged semesters, not just those with a travel component. It is recognized that there may be special circumstances where an exception to the term-based course requirement is warranted. Therefore, a subcommittee of ACUE will be composed to review and approve these instances, consisting of several college associate deans and representatives from such offices as Student Aid, the University Registrar and Global Programs.

Cc: University Faculty Senate Officers